

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TOKYO 09498 240954Z
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 AS-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 /056 W
-----072305 240957Z /21

P 240910Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8930
INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 9498

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: JA KN US SOPN
SUBJECT: JAPANESE PRESS STORY ON US-NORTH KOREAN CONTACTS

1. JUNE 24 TOKYO PRESS FEATURED STORY QUOTING UNIDENTIFIED JAPANESE "GOVERNMENT LEADER" THAT IT WAS HIS IMPRESSION THAT US MIGHT DISPATCH EMISSARY TO KPRK IN NEAR FUTURE. STORY RECEIVED ONLY MODERATE PLAY AND DISAPPEARED IN LATER EDITIONS.

2. WE HAVE CONFIRMED THROUGH BOTH FONOFF AND PRESS SOURCES THAT UNIDENTIFIED LEADER WAS IN FACT CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY SONODA. ACCORDING TO JAPANESE JOURNALIST PRESENT AT SONODA'S BRIEFING, SONODA HAD NOTED IN PASSING: "WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT US MIGHT SEND AN OFFICIAL TO NORTH KOREAN SOON." WHEN PRESS JUMPED ON STATEMENT, SONODA QUICKLY BACKED OFF. ONE OF SONODA'S AIDES SUBSEQUENTLY INFORMED PRESS THAT NO SUCH REPORT OF POSSIBLE US EMISSARY HAD COME FROM FONOFF. ACCORDING TO JOURNALISH, JAPANESE PRESS REALIZED THAT SONODA'S COMMENT WAS "SO UNLIKELY" THAT IT WAS DECIDED TO GIVE IT ONLY MODERATE COVERAGE.

3. ACCORDING TO JOURNALIST, FONOFF HAS TAKEN PAINS TO DENY STORY FULLY IN TODAY'S PRESS BACKGROUNDER. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, FONOFF NE ASIA DIVISION

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OFFICIAL EXPRESSED PERSONAL EMBARRASSMENT OVER SONODA'S MISSTATEMENT AND REITERATED THAT GOJ COMPLETELY UNDERSTOOD US POLICY IN REGARD TO DISCUSSIONS WITH NORTH KOREA (I.E., ONLY WITH PARTICIPATION OF ROK).

4. QUESTION REMAINS FROM WHERE SONODA RECEIVED THIS

FALSE IMPRESSION. JOURNALIST AND FONOFF SOURCES
NOTED THAT SONODA HAD RECENTLY MET SEVERAL TIMES
WITH LDP DIET MEMBER CHUJI KUNO, WELL-KNOWN BOTH
FOR HIS PRO-PYONGYANG SYMPATHIES AND HIS DESIRE TO
INITIATE DIALOGUE BETWEEN DPRK AND BOTH JAPAN AND
US. IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT KUNO'S WISHFUL
THINKING MISLED SONODA, WHOSE DEALINGS WITH PRESS
HAVE NEVER BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY CAUTION OR RESTRAINT.
MANSFIELD

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, FOREIGN RELATIONS, ALLEGATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TOKYO09498
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770226-0265
Format: TEL
From: TOKYO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770619/aaaaaqlq.tel
Line Count: 71
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d9dc7e76-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2033424
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: JAPANESE PRESS STORY ON US-NORTH KOREAN CONTACTS
TAGS: SOPN, PDIP, JA, KN, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d9dc7e76-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009